

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EUR-08 IO-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00
NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 ACDA-10 TRSE-00 L-01 OMB-01
CCO-00 PM-03 SP-02 H-01 PRS-01 PA-01 /063 W
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P R 121146Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0544
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 07332

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PDEV FT FR ET SO US
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SEELYE'S DISCUSSIONS WITH THE
FRENCH ON THE FTAI

REF: STATE 51949 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: IN MEETINGS WITH DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRE-
TARY SEELYE, FRENCH OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT THE
FTAI FACTIONS NOW MEETING IN PARIS HAVE AGREED TO
HOLD ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS AT THE SAME TIME AS THE
REFERENDUM ON APRIL 24. THE FRENCH HOPE THAT THE
OTHER FACTIONS ALSO WILL AGREE DURING THE ACCRA OAU
ROUND TABLE ON DJIBOUTI, A MEETING WHOSE PROCEEDINGS
MAY PROVIDE A BAROMETER OF ETHIOPIA'S REAL ATTITUDE
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TOWARDS THE TERRITORY. THE FRENCH HOPE TO INSURE
EQUAL AFAR AND ISSA REPRESENTATION IN THE NEW ASSEMBLY
AND GOVERNMENT, CONSIDERING THIS TO BE A SINE QUA NON
TO FUTURE STABILITY. FRANCE WILL MAINTAIN TROOPS
IN DJIBOUTI UNTIL THE OAU AND THE UN HAVE RECOGNIZED
IT. A FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE AFTER THAT DATE WILL
REQUIRE BOTH A REQUEST FROM THE NEW GOVERNMENT AND

A JUDGMENT BY THE GOF THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS BALANCED AND LIKELY TO PROVIDE STABILITY. IN SUCH CASE, A MILITARY TRAINING MISSION IS MORE PROBABLE THAN THE CONTINUED MAINTENANCE OF MORE SIZEABLE FORCES. A QUAI OFFICIAL THINKS ETHIOPIA MAY NOT HOLD TOGETHER AND PREDICTS THE EVENTUAL INDEPENDENCE OF ERITREA. THE FRENCH ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE RUSSIANS' RETAINING THEIR INFLUENCE IN SOMALIA AND THINK THE SOVIETS STILL INTEND TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN THE HORN. END SUMMARY.

2. AMBASSADOR SEELYE AND EMBOFFS HELD DISCUSSIONS ON DJIBOUTI MARCH 11 WITH QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA GUY GEORGY, HIS TWO DEPUTIES, THE COORDINATOR FOR THE FTAI IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, JEAN-JACQUES ROBERT, AND THE PM'S AFRICAN ADVISOR MICHEL DE BONNECORSE. THE FOLLOWING IS A RESUME OF THE INFORMATION THEY PROVIDED, WITH THEIR PERSONAL VIEWS EXPRESSED AS INDICATED.

3. THE FOUR DJIBOUTI GROUPS NOW GATHERED IN PARIS (FTAI GOVERNMENT, LPAI, FLCS, AND THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY) AGREED MARCH 10 TO GO ALONG WITH THE FRENCH DESIRE TO HOLD ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH THE REFERENDUM ON APRIL 24. (TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY IS NOW SLATED FOR LATE JUNE OR EARLY JULY, PROBABLY BEFORE THE OAU SUMMIT.) THE FRENCH HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE THREE ETHIOPIAN-BACKED GROUPS (UNI, MLD AND MPL) ALSO ARE INCLINED TO FAVOR ELECTIONS BUT WERE CONFIDENTIAL

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PREVENTED FROM COMING TO PARIS BY THE ETHIOPIANS. THE FRENCH HOPE THAT THE ETHIOPIAN-LEANING FACTIONS WILL ATTEND THE OAU-SPONSORED ROUND-TABLE AT ACCRA MARCH 31-APRIL 3, AND THAT THEY, TOO, WILL ENDORSE ELECTIONS. ROBERT THOUGHT THAT THIS MEETING WOULD GIVE A GOOD CLUE TO ETHIOPIA'S INTENTIONS: IF THE LATTER'S PROTEGEES TRY TO SCUTTLE THE CONFERENCE, IT WILL BE CLEAR THAT ETHIOPIA HAS CHOSEN THE WORST CASE OPTION. HE WONDERED ON WHAT BASIS ETHIOPIA SEEMED TO THINK THAT ITS CLIENTS WOULD RECEIVE OUTSIDE SUPPORT IN ACCRA.

4. ONCE AGREEMENT ON THE PRINCIPLE OF ELECTIONS IS OBTAINED, NEGOTIATIONS TO ASSURE THAT THERE WILL BE EQUAL AFAR AND ISSA REPRESENTATION IN THE ASSEMBLY WILL ENSUE. THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT ONLY IF EACH ETHNIC GROUP CONSIDERS ITSELF NOT MENACED BY THE OTHER, WITHIN BOTH A BALANCED ASSEMBLY AND THE NEW TERRITORIAL GOVERNMENT REFLECTING THAT ASSEMBLY'S COM-

POSITION, WILL A PEACEFUL EVOLUTION BE POSSIBLE. IF
THE AFARS FELT OUTNUMBERED, THEY WOULD CALL FOR

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ETHIOPIAN HELP; IF THE ISSAS FELT INFERIOR, THEY
WOULD INVITE SOMALI INTERVENTION. A SMALL ARAB
REPRESENTATION IN THE ASSEMBLY IS ALSO ENVISAGED.

5. ROBERT SAID THAT THE FRENCH WILL KEEP THEIR
6,000 TROOPS IN DJIBOUTI UNTIL IT HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED
BY THE OAU AND THE UN, PRESUMABLY IN LATE SEPTEMBER.
IF THE NEW GOVERNMENT SO REQUESTS, AND IF THE FRENCH
CONSIDER THAT THAT GOVERNMENT HAS THE BALANCED
CHARACTER LIKELY TO INSURE STABILITY, THE FRENCH
WOULD BE WILLING TO SIGN A MILITARY COOPERATION
AGREEMENT. ROBERT NOTED THAT SUCH AN ACCORD MIGHT
TAKE THE FORM OF PROVIDING MILITARY ADVISORS OR OF
MAINTAINING MORE SIZEABLE NUMBERS OF TROOPS IN
DJIBOUTI. BY HIS STATEMENT THAT FRANCE'S PROBLEMS
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WOULD BE OVER ONCE DJIBOUTI WAS RECOGNIZED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, HE IMPLIED THAT THE FORMER WAS MORE LIKELY.

6. THE FRENCH CONTINUE TO HAVE DIFFICULTIES TALKING TO ANYONE IN ADDIS. THEY ARE INCREASINGLY DOUBTFUL THAT ETHIOPIA CAN BE HELD TOGETHER AND GEORGY PREDICTED THE EVENTUAL INDEPENDENCE OF ERITREA. DESPITE THIS INTERNAL CON-FUSION, WITH ADDIS HARDLY CONTROLLING MUCH OF THE BACK COUNTRY, ETHIOPIA MIGHT MOVE AGAINST DJIBOUTI, ALTHOUGH THE FRENCH DO NOT EXPECT A FRONTAL ATTACK IN THE NEAR FUTURE FROM EITHER SIDE. QUAI OFFICIALS NOTED THAT THE AFARS ARE FAR FROM BEING AT THE BECK AND CALL OF ADDIS AND THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION OF DJIBOUTI WOULD PREFER NOT TO BE UNDER EITHER SOMALI OR ETHIOPIAN DOMINATION GIVEN CURRENT CONDITIONS IN BOTH COUNTRIES.

7. CONCERNING SOVIET INFLUENCE, BONNECORSE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THERE ARE STRAINS BETWEEN THE USSR AND SOMALIA AND SAID THAT THERE ARE SIGNS SOMALIA MIGHT BREAK AWAY IN TWO OR THREE YEARS. GEORGY, TOO, QUESTIONED WHETHER SOVIET INFLUENCE WOULD BE DURABLE, NOT ONLY IN SOMALIA, BUT THROUGHOUT THE CONTINENT. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE INITIATIVE FOR RUSSO-ETHIOPIAN ARMS TALKS CAME FROM ADDIS, NOT MOSCOW. THE QUAI CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT FOR THE MOMENT, THE SOVIETS THINK THEIR INTERESTS IN THE HORN WILL BE SERVED BY EXERCISING A RESTRAINING INFLUENCE.

8. THE FRENCH HOPE THE SAUDIS AND OTHER MODERATE ARABS WILL ASSIST THE INDEPENDENT STATE AND BE A MODERATING INFLUENCE, BUT SEEM SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ARAB EFFORTS. WHILE THEY MADE
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NO REQUEST FOR AMERICAN SUPPORT, THE FRENCH APPRECIATED SEELYE'S ASSURANCES THAT WE WOULD BE DIPLOMATICALLY HELPFUL WHERE POSSIBLE.
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